



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service
Office of the Surgeon General

Rockville MD 20857

FEB 7 1994

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman, Committee on Labor
and Human Resources
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

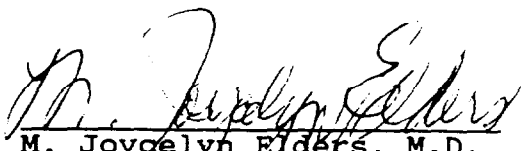
We write to you to express our views regarding any proposed federal policy that would mandate written parental consent prior to counselling or providing condoms or other contraceptive aides to unemancipated minors. Decisions regarding the appropriate dissemination and content of health education materials should not be made at the federal level, but rather by local public health and education professionals working together with parents and community leaders.

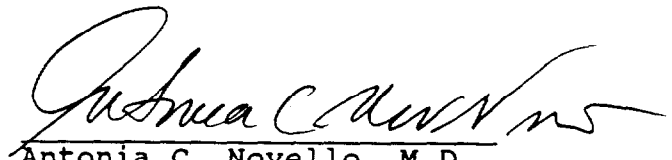
The public health effects of mandating written parental consent must be carefully considered. While we believe that teenagers should be encouraged to consult with their parents about family planning and STD-prevention measures, a requirement for written parental consent is dangerously restrictive and could lead to dire and unwanted public health consequences.

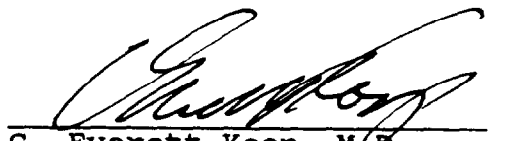
The data show that increasing numbers of adolescents under 18 years of age are sexually active with one or more partners. This behavior places them at risk for a range of serious sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS, and unintended teenage childbearing. There are data showing that adolescents will forego counseling, education, and services if parental consent is required. A policy of this nature would sharply reduce the hope of reaching those teenagers who are most at risk, and reduce the ability of health professionals to encourage family involvement, or assist adolescents in taking responsible action.


As our nation strives to confront the growing AIDS epidemic, and reduce the incidence of HIV infection among youth, it is vital to provide effective education materials. A federal law curtailing or excluding information regarding condoms pending written parental consent cannot be justified on public health grounds, particularly when this information may save teen lives. Decisions about information dissemination and content should be made at the local level with ongoing involvement of parents and community leaders.

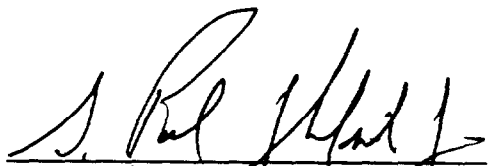
We support the efforts of public health professionals and health care providers to encourage minors to involve their families in all aspects of health education and health services. We would strongly oppose a federal mandate that requires parental consent as a condition of receiving federal health funds.



M. Joycelyn Elders, M.D.
U.S. Surgeon General


Antonia C. Novello, M.D.
Surgeon General (1990-1993)


C. Everett Koop, M.D.
Surgeon General (1981-1989)


Julius B. Richmond, M.D.
Surgeon General (1977-1981)


S. Paul Ehrlich, Jr., M.D.
Acting Surgeon General
(1973-1977)


Jesse L. Steinfeld, M.D.
Surgeon General (1969-1973)